

**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**About the Livable South Downtown Executive Recommendations**  
*December 8, 2009*

**Where is South Downtown?**

"South Downtown" includes areas within Seattle's Downtown Urban Center, and areas of land at the northern edge of the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center. Neighborhood areas include:

- Pioneer Square
- Chinatown/International District
- Little Saigon and other areas east of Interstate 5,
- Areas around the stadiums,
- Areas at the northern edge of the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing Industrial Center, including the First Avenue South site west of Pioneer Square.



**Why planning in South Downtown now?**

South Downtown's is located at the hub of numerous modes of transportation. Yet, investment and growth in the area has not kept pace with other Center City neighborhoods. Neighborhood plans and other voices in the community have suggested adjustments to land use regulations to address key challenges and help revitalize South Downtown neighborhoods, including: renovation of buildings in historic neighborhoods, increasing density to support the economic health of small business districts; concerns about public safety; and parcels of land that are vacant or underused. Changes are needed in South Downtown. However, the area's transformation must balance local and regional needs and respect the rich culture and history of the area.

**What are the goals and objectives of the Livable South Downtown Planning Study?**

<u>GOALS</u>	<u>OBJECTIVES</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stimulate housing and jobs through zoning and land use decisions</li><li>• Respect neighborhood character and neighborhood plans</li><li>• Promote an integrated mix of uses</li><li>• Support quality connections between neighborhoods and downtown as a whole</li><li>• Encourage economic vitality and environmental sustainability</li><li>• Accommodate regional services and ensure they align with the goals of the local community</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate zoning opportunities and constraints in South Downtown, with an emphasis on attracting more housing and jobs</li><li>• Identify desired development</li><li>• Recommend and implement City land use actions that will support an emerging residential/employment community</li><li>• Consider opportunities for sustainable practices in future development</li><li>• Recommend public and private investments that would contribute to a well-balanced community in South Downtown</li></ul>

## What are the key elements of the Study?

The Livable South Downtown Planning Study includes several important elements. Detailed information about the project, including study results for numerous topics affecting South Downtown, can be found at [www.seattle.gov/DPD/Planning/South\\_Downtown](http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/Planning/South_Downtown). They include:

1. Community Engagement. The project extensively engaged community organizations and individuals, hosted four community-wide meetings and fourteen meetings of the 25-member Livable South Downtown Advisory Group. All meetings were open to the public.
2. Land Use Study. The *Livable South Downtown Planning Study Executive Recommendations* final report was published in December 2009. This report describes proposed land use actions and legislation for City Council consideration in 2009.
3. Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analysis. An EIS was prepared for the study and the final EIS was released on May 29, 2008 after extensive analysis, review and public comment.
4. Related Studies. The Executive's report and recommendations were informed by independent environmental, transportation, and economic analyses; urban design studies; and in coordination with City departments that provide services to South Downtown neighborhoods. These related studies are available for viewing on the project web site.

## What are the recommendations?

DPD is proposing to update Land Use regulations in South Downtown to meet neighborhood plan objectives and to advance the City's goals of locating residential and workforce density near transportation infrastructure and other amenities. Key Land Use recommendations include:

- Rezone decisions (changing zoning on land from one designation to another)
- Increases in allowable heights and densities in certain areas
- Development standards to ensure quality design in new buildings
- Introduction of land use programs to support community goals in South Downtown including:
  - incentive zoning programs to increase the supply of affordable housing, public open spaces, and other amenities
  - South Downtown Historic Transfer of Development Rights/Transfer of Development Potential (TDR/ TDP) and amendments to the existing housing TDR program
  - Sustainability-related development standards

## Is more residential density planned?

A key goal of the Pioneer Square and Chinatown/I.D. neighborhood plans is to increase the number of residents in South Downtown. The EIS analyzed potential increases in residents consistent with regional growth projections for the South Downtown area. In general the recommendations support opportunities and incentives for increased residential density within and around historic core / neighborhood commercial areas including:

- Increased zoned density and height for infill residential development above ground floor retail in Pioneer Square and at the edges of the Chinatown/International District historic core. Residential densities are also anticipated above active street-front uses in Little Saigon.
- Increased residential density in tall buildings located in Japantown in the northern Chinatown/I.D. neighborhood and on the Stadium North Lot.

## How do the recommendations address workforce/ commercial density?

Recommendations encourage increasing workforce density at the edges of South Downtown, near regional transit hubs, and where physical conditions or adjacent uses would make residential development less desirable. Height and density for commercial and light industrial uses is proposed to be increased in the following areas:

- The First Avenue South corridor immediately east of the Port of Seattle Terminal 46;
- The area south of Chinatown/I.D. and immediately north of the Interstate 90 ramps;
- Areas within the Stadium North Lot.

## How were the proposed heights and densities decided?

South Downtown neighborhoods are unique. In general, proposed heights and densities strive to balance sensitive historic and cultural resources, desired neighborhood character, potential demand for residential and commercial density, feasible development types given current and anticipated economic conditions, and citywide and regional growth goals.

In general, heights and densities are proposed to be increased in areas where parcels are large enough to accommodate larger, taller buildings, such as full block sites in the Japantown area, the Stadium North Lot, development sites that will result from the SR 99 tunnel project in the First Avenue South Corridor, and areas south of Chinatown/I.D. and north of Interstate 90 ramps.

Since the draft recommendations, DPD has worked with architects, developers and property owners to refine proposed development standards to ensure feasible development for high rise structures in the Japantown area. Additionally, FAR and heights were increased in the proposed DMR and DMC zone east of Interstate 5 based on conversations with developers, architects and the broader community, as well as independent site analysis. A summary of existing and proposed heights is found on page 7 of this document.

## How will historic and cultural resources be protected?

South Downtown is known for its rich history and cultural character. The historic preservation districts, boards and guidelines are long-established City policies and programs that will continue to protect the Pioneer Square and Chinatown/International District neighborhoods. Recommended Land Use changes are intended to mitigate negative impacts on sensitive historic resources, and support new development that is compatible with the character of surrounding neighborhoods. Recommendations also encourage reuse and rehabilitation of existing historic structures, some of which have been unoccupied for many years and are in need of substantial repair. Recommendations to encourage the preservation of historic resources include:

- A new South Downtown Historic TDR/TDP program to provide resources for the rehabilitation of buildings that are historic-contributing per the National Register Historic Districts.
- Retaining current zoning of historic-contributing buildings in both Chinatown/I.D. and Pioneer Square. Retention of zoned density reduces potential economic pressure to demolish historic buildings, and ensures an appropriate scale of nearby development.
- Retention of existing review board processes and regulations.

## What does the proposal do to encourage affordable housing in South Downtown?

According to a detailed survey conducted by the Seattle Office of Housing, 77% of existing residential units in South Downtown are affordable to low income households (defined as household income at or below 80% area median household income). Many of those units will remain affordable for a period of time per regulatory contract. However, some affordable units could be converted to market rate units, and demand for affordable units is anticipated to remain strong throughout the Center City area. The Office of Housing will continue to work with affordable housing providers in South Downtown to preserve and develop new affordable housing.

Recommendations to address the need for affordable housing include measure that will:

- provide housing close to transit, employment, goods and services;
- encourage the development of affordable housing and other public amenities in exchange for additional height and floor area;
- leverage the incentive zoning program with other programs, including property tax exemptions through Seattle Homes Within Reach;
- retain existing heights and density of most existing affordable housing units, helping to avoid economic pressure to convert affordable units to market rate housing;
- encourage use of Affordable Housing TDR In South Downtown; and

## How do the draft recommendations address open space in South Downtown?

Planning for public improvements continues throughout all of the Downtown Urban Center. Proposed Land Use Code amendments will result in the provision of new public spaces in South Downtown through the following means:

- The incentive zoning program is anticipated to direct resources toward the provision of open spaces associated with new development.
- Designation of green streets proposed in key areas of South Downtown. Green streets are park-like public rights of way that serve pedestrians and vehicles, and can be developed with a combination of City and private funds.
- An increment of additional height is proposed in Little Saigon only if a ground-level mid-block pedestrian open space corridor is provided. A separate study of open space and urban design in this area can be found on the project web site.
- Seattle Green Factor requirements applicable to South Downtown will ensure investment in landscaping and vegetation that will help improve the public realm experience in South Downtown and provide environmental benefits.

## Where are existing open spaces in South Downtown?

Following is a summarized list of neighborhood parks, open space, recreational features and public-private open spaces. Locations identified with a "\*" are publicly used spaces that are maintained by private or public entities other than the City of Seattle.

### Pioneer Square

Occidental Park and pedestrian mall  
City Hall Park  
Pioneer Square Park  
Pedestrian plaza north of King Street Station  
Washington Street Boat Landing  
Waterfall Park at 2nd/Main\*  
Qwest Field north plaza\*, Occidental promenade  
Safeco Field plazas\*  
Colman Dock  
Prefontaine Place

### Chinatown/I.D.

Kobe Terrace/Danny Woo Gardens  
Hing Hay Park (expanded through acquisition of land through Levy funds in 2008)  
Children's Park  
Plazas in the Union Station block\*  
Lane Street plaza at Uwajimaya\*  
Community Center, Library

### Nearby outside the study area:

Yesler Terrace community center and playfields  
Bailey Gatzert School playfields  
Dr. Jose Rizal Park

## Does the study address small business in South Downtown?

Neighborhood commercial areas in Pioneer Square, Chinatown/I.D. and Little Saigon are central features of life in South Downtown. These areas will be protected and supported through:

- Introduction of provisions that require active pedestrian-oriented street-level uses in Little Saigon, Pioneer Square and Chinatown/I.D.;
- Limits on the overall size of businesses in sensitive small business areas, such as Little Saigon, while allowing larger businesses outside existing small-business centers;
- Requirements limiting building scale and encouraging designs consistent with neighborhood-scale mixed use areas, such as upper-level setbacks, street-level retail or residential entrances, limits on blank walls, among others;
- Incentives to locate residential units in upper floors of buildings in- and around small business areas to provide a round-the-clock population and customers for local services.

Reports relating to the Project's study of economic issues in South Downtown can be found on the project web site.

## What are the environmental benefits of the proposal?

The proposed recommendations are consistent with and advance the City's goal of reducing its carbon footprint by:

- encouraging growth near services and transit, thereby reducing automobile dependency and development pressures on fragile natural environments outside of the Downtown Urban Center;
- incorporating green building practices;
- emphasizing water quality benefits of landscaping through the introduction of the Seattle Green Factor in South Downtown;
- LEED performance requirements for larger development projects;
- energy planning requirements for large development projects in South Downtown.

## How do the recommendations address the needs of Seattle Industry?

The *Executive Recommendations* retain the boundaries of the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing Industrial Center (MIC). Areas within the Greater Duwamish MIC will retain an industrial zone designation, and no residential uses will be allowed in these areas.

Freight mobility patterns have changed significantly over the past decade, particularly with improvements to State Route 519, which directs trucks over dedicated ramps between Interstate 5 and Fourth- and First Avenues South. Recommendations are intended to avoid potential conflicts with freight mobility needs. For example, no zoning changes are proposed south of South Royal Brougham Way—a transportation corridor that provides a critical link in Seattle's freight network both north-south and east-west. In the First Avenue South vicinity, no increases to density are proposed adjacent to South Royal Brougham Way in order to minimize potential conflicts between passenger vehicles and trucks. A detailed discussion of transportation issues can be found in the Livable South Downtown EIS.

## What are the new zoned heights?

Following is a summary of existing and proposed height limits. It should be noted that the land use recommendations provided a range of programs and design standards in addition to height limits.

Subarea	Existing Zone and Heights	Proposed Zone and Heights
Pioneer Square	Current zoning allows heights of 100' with some areas zoned for up to 120' for residential uses  A variable height limit applies in some areas, suppressing maximum heights to approximately 85', depending upon the block	Proposed zoning will allow up to 120' in central portions of Pioneer Square, up to 150' for areas east  The variable height limit is proposed to be eliminated, providing a more predictable regulatory environment in Pioneer Square  Zoning on the North lot (passed by City Council in 2009) allows heights up to 240'. This is the only area in Pioneer Square where lots greater than half-block are located.
First Avenue South	Current industrial-commercial zoning allows heights up to 85'	Proposed zoning allows heights up to 160' in height
Chinatown I.D.	Current zoning allows heights up to 85'	Proposed zoning retains current height limits in central Chinatown/ID where few large development sites exist amid historic structures that are relatively low in scale.  Proposed zoning in south Chinatown/I.D. allows heights up to 150' in height
South of Dearborn Street (south of Chinatown/I.D.)	Current commercial zoning is auto-oriented, and allows heights up to 85'	Proposed zoning allows heights up to 150' with greater allowance for commercial uses. The area is proposed to be incorporated into the Chinatown/International District neighborhood with its associated review of building design and uses
South of S. Charles Street	Current industrial zoning allows heights up to 85'	Proposed zoning is industrial-commercial, allowing a greater range of commercial uses, and heights up to 160'
Japantown	In areas where zoning is proposed to change, heights are allowed up to 120' or 150'	Proposed zoning is to allow heights up to 240' for residential towers. Commercial uses are allowed at various heights, depending upon the zone
Little Saigon and other areas east of I-5 within the Downtown Urban Center	Existing zoning is a combination of commercial and industrial zones with heights up to 65'	Proposed zoning is for two downtown zone designations (DMR/C and DMC) allow heights up to 85' generally, and 150' with the inclusion of a mid-block pedestrian open space public amenity  Design standards are proposed to be added, and retail uses north of S. Weller Street are limited to sizes found in Neighborhood Commercial 2 zones
Rainier Corridor	Existing zoning is a combination of auto-oriented commercial and industrial zones with heights up to 65'	Proposed zoning is Neighborhood Commercial 2, a pedestrian-oriented zone allowing heights up to 65'